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# The Etymology of Greek σθένος

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*Abstract:* The present article investigates the different etymologies that have been suggested for Greek σθένος. It starts by analysing the meaning and the instances in the oldest literary texts. It then confronts the suggested etymologies with the Mycenaean evidence and proper names in Thracian and Celtic. The article finds that the two most commonly accepted etymologies are problematic because they require the presence of labiovelars but that presence is not corroborated by the Mycenaean evidence. Proper names in Thracian and Celtic also seem to question the accepted etymologies, but these names are not entirely clear. As a result of the Mycenaean evidence, another etymology has to be suggested.\*

## 1. Compounds and derivatives of σθένος

In Greek epic poetry, one finds the following compounds of σθένος: the adjectives σθεναρός, εὐρυσθενής, εὐσθενής, μεγασθενής and the verb περισθενέω.<sup>1</sup>

The names that are built on σθένος are: Stheneboia, Sthenelaos, Borysthenes, Agasthenes, Pleisthenes, Stheno, and Sthenelos.<sup>2</sup> It is possible that the name Sthenno from a Gorgon in *Theogony* 276<sup>3</sup> is a derivation of this root, but in that case the double *n* is a problem. Names in *sthenes* are common, as can be seen by the names of politicians such as Kleisthenes and Erastosthenes, and the orator Demosthenes. The names in *-stheus* and *-stheia* are also linked to (cf. *infra*).

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<sup>1</sup> O'Sullivan 2010:110.

<sup>2</sup> O'Sullivan 2010:110.

<sup>3</sup> M. Schmidt 2010, but the link with σθένος is not made in that specific article.

## 2. The meaning of σθένος in Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns, and later poetry

In Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns, σθένος occurs 49 times,<sup>4</sup> and is more common in the *Iliad* than in the *Odyssey*.<sup>5</sup>

**a)** The basic meaning is “(physical) strength” and it is something that all living creatures, and not only humans and gods, possess.<sup>6</sup>

**a.1** It is what gives a mortal or god the edge over others,<sup>7</sup> and is in that context often described as “unchallengeable”, “irresistible” or “unstoppable”:

*Iliad* 8.32 εὖ νυ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν ὅ τοι σθένος οὐκ ἐπιεικτόν:<sup>8</sup>  
“we already know your strength very well and how none can stand up against it”.

This verse is pronounced by Athene, who complies reluctantly with Zeus’s command that the Greeks be left without divine help, until they treat Akhilleus with the respect he deserves. Zeus added that any god who tried to resist him, would be chained and thrown into Tartaros.

*Iliad* 15.108 κάρτεϊ τε σθένεϊ τε διακριδὸν εἶναι ἄριστος.  
“he is pre-eminently the best because of his power and strength”.

By these words Hera indicates to Themis that Zeus is so almighty, that he cannot be resisted, not even by the other gods combined.

*Iliad* 5.783 ἥ συσι κάπροισιν, τῶν τε σθένος οὐκ ἀλαπαδόν,  
“(resembling meat devouring lions) or wild pigs, boars, whose strength is never exhausted”

This verse is used to describe Hera, who – in the guise of Stentor – incites the Greeks against the Trojans. This specific verse is repeated further on in the *Iliad* 7,257 where it is used to depict a fight between Aias and Hektor: both men are likened to lions or wild boars with unlimited power. The formula τῶν τε σθένος οὐκ ἀλαπαδόν is echoed in the *Odyssey*.

<sup>4</sup> The Chicago Homer database, accessed via <http://digital.library.northwestern.edu/homer/html/application.html>, gives 49 examples, but we will not be able to discuss them all in detail here.

<sup>5</sup> LSJ *sub uoce*.

<sup>6</sup> Krafft 1963:48; Snell 1969:42–45.

<sup>7</sup> O’Sullivan 2010:114.

<sup>8</sup> The examples are taken from the Chicago Homer database. We used the OCT and the Teubner texts to quote the examples. The translations are based on the Loeb and the Chicago Homer, but we adapted them, whenever we felt that the translation did not render the ideas accurately enough.

*Odyssey* 18.373 ἥλικες, ἰσοφόροι, τῶν τε σθένης οὐκ ἀλαπαδνόν,  
“(oxen) of the same age and equally able to carry (the yoke), whose  
strength is inexhaustible”

This verse is pronounced by Odysseus in response to the suitor Eury-makhos. Eury-makhos asked Odysseus if he was willing to work on the land to earn a living. Odysseus replied that he wanted to roganise a contest between the two of them to see who would be the best worker on the land.

*Odyssey* 21.282 χειρῶν καὶ σθένος πειρήσομαι, εἴ μοι ἔτ' ἐστὶν  
“I can test my hands and strength, whether I still have (the power)”

In these verses, Odysseus asks the suitors to use the bow, to see if he is still as powerful, as he was before. The bow will be the instrument by which the suitors will be vanquished, and therefore Odysseus's references to χειρῶν and σθένος indicate that his physical power will be needed to overcome the suitors.

**a.2** It is an element, where one relies on to overcome others, or where one is proud of:<sup>9</sup>

*Iliad* 8.337 Ἐκτώρ δ' ἐν πρότοισι κίε σθένει βλεμεαίνων.  
“and Hektor raged in the forefront in the pride of his strength”.

In this particular verse, the poet describes Hektor as an unstoppable force. He rages through the ranks of the Greeks as a wild boar in the fields. This fury is inspired by Zeus's (temporary) support for the Trojans as punishment for the Greeks mistreating Akhilleus.

*Iliad* 9.237 ἀστράπτει: Ἐκτώρ δὲ μέγα σθένει βλεμεαίνων  
“(and Zeus) showed him good signs (on the right), and Hektor, taking  
huge pride in his strength (raged irresistibly)”

In this particular instance, Hektor is again being described as a fury causing death and destruction among the Greeks. This is again explained as a sign of Zeus's temporary support for the Trojans.

*Iliad* 12.42 κάπριος ἢ λέων στρέφεται σθένει βλεμεαίνων:  
“a wild boar or lion turns around, exulting in his strength”

This description compares the raging Hektor to a wild boar or a fierce lion, that rages and fights back in anger in spite of being entrapped by

<sup>9</sup> Athanassakis 1970, especially page 54, note 12, the link between σθένος and βλεμεαίνω is treated extensively by Athanassakis 1970; Voigt 1982.

hunters and hunting dogs. This comparison is somewhat surprising, because Hektor is not being hunted in this instance, but is chasing the Greeks himself.

*Iliad* 17.22 θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι περὶ σθένει βλεμεαίνει,  
“the spirit in his chest boasts about its strength”

This verse is pronounced by Menelaos in a prayer to Zeus. After Patroklos was killed, a fierce battle ensued for his armour. Menelaos also engaged in this fighting. He encountered the Trojan Panthoos, who scoffed at Menelaos, telling him that the same fate as that of Patroklos awaited him. Menelaos then prayed to Zeus and complained about the arrogance and excessive boasting displayed by Panthoos, saying that his pride was even bigger than a lion or a wild boar.

*Iliad* 17.135 ἄνδρες ἐπακτῆρες· ὁ δέ τε σθένει βλεμεαίνει,  
“(when hunters have come across a lion leadings its young in the forest),  
but the lion, however, stands in the pride of his great strength”

This verse describes Aias’s defence of Patroklos’s dead body. Hektor is preying on it to decapitate it and throw it to the dogs of Troy, but then Aias intervenes. Aias is likened to a lion protecting its young from the hunters. The comparison between the defensive Aias and the countered lion is striking, because at this specific time in the Trojan War the Greeks are being scattered and hunted by Hektor.

*Iliad* 20.36 Ἥφαιστος δ’ ἅμα τοῖσι κίε σθένει βλεμεαίνων  
“Hephaistos went together with them in the pride of his great strength”

This verse is unusual: it describes how Hephaistos follows the gods who support the Greeks, while taking pride in his strength, while the first word in the next line is χολεύων “being lame”. Athanassakis explained this verse by assuming that Hephaistos was here used as a synonym for “fire”,<sup>10</sup> but that cannot be the case, as the first word of the next line is χολεύων “being lame”, which is a word that can only be applied to the god Hephaistos. We would rather expect Hephaistos to take pride in his craftsmanship, but this does not mean that this verse is an interpolation: in *Iliad* 18,419–421 Hephaistos’s servants are described as having σθένος and νόος, and are said to support their master, while he tries to walk:

*Iliad* 18.419–421 τῆς ἐν μὲν νόος ἐστὶ μετὰ φρεσίν, ἐν δὲ καὶ αὐδὴ  
καὶ σθένος, ἀθανάτων δὲ θεῶν ἅπο ἔργα ἴσασιν.

<sup>10</sup> Athanassakis 1970:56.

αἱ μὲν ὕπαιθα ἄνακτος ἐποίπνυν· αὐτὰρ ὃ ἔρρων  
 “There is intelligence in their hearts, and speech and strength, and from  
 the immortal gods they have learned how to do things.  
 They moved busily in support of their master; and he, limping (to a place  
 nearby)...”

Therefore, the description in *Iliad* 20.36 is in all likelihood deliberate.

*Iliad* 17.329 κάρτεϊ τε σθένει τε πεποιθότας ἡγορέη τε  
 “trusting their force, strength, and their courage”

When Apollon notices that Aineias and other Trojans are being driven back and holding back in fear, he addresses Aineias with these words in an attempt to make them fight again. Apollon argues that there have been men in the past who trusted their own strength and courage so much, that they even defied Zeus’s will. If those men were able to do that and be brave, then certainly, Aineias and the Trojans should be able to act accordingly, because they are not acting against Zeus’s will (yet).<sup>11</sup>

**a.3** In this physical meaning, σθένος is often combined and strengthened by κράτος, ἀλκή (but σθένος and ἀλκή are not synonyms, as ἀλκή never gives one the edge or causes one to win a fight)<sup>12</sup> or:

*Iliad* 15.108 κάρτεϊ τε σθένει τε διακριδὸν εἶναι ἄριστος.  
 “he is pre-eminently the best because of his power and strength”.  
 (cf. supra)

*Iliad* 17.322 κάρτεϊ καὶ σθένει σφετέρῳ· ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς Απόλλων  
 “by their own force and strength, had not Apollo in person”

This verse describes the problems of the Trojans, and in particular of Aineias, in holding back the Greeks (cf. supra). At this instance, Homer describes the Greeks as being so full of strength that they would already have conquered Troy now: only a god can push them back.

*Iliad* 17.329 κάρτεϊ τε σθένει τε πεποιθότας ἡγορέη τε  
 “trusting their force, strength, and their courage” (cf. supra)

*Iliad* 17.212 ἀλκῆς καὶ σθένεος· μετὰ δὲ κλειτοὺς ἐπικούρους

<sup>11</sup> Eventually, they will be fighting against Zeus’s will, as Troy is doomed. Even Apollon has to accept that: when the fates decide that it is Hektor who should die by the hands of Akhilleus, Apollon abandons the hero. Obviously, the audience is well aware of this.

<sup>12</sup> Geiß 1955; she stated that ἀλκή is never used in an instrumental, nor that victory is obtained by it, but we believe that ἐτεραλκέα νίκην in *Odyssey* 22.236 is an example to the contrary.

“(his limbs were filled with) fighting spirit and force, and he went to his famous allies (calling them loudly)”

This verse describes Hektor while preparing for the (final) battle against Akhilleus. Hektor stripped Patroklos from his armour and put it on himself. First, the poet inserts a dramatic monologue of Zeus, in which he forecasts that Hektor will not return, then the poet describes Hektor as being filled with so much strength and power, that he is almost equal in strength to Ares.

*Iliad* 17.499 ἀλκῆς καὶ σθένεος πλῆτο φρένας ἀμφὶ μελαίνας:  
“(he prayed to Zeus and) was filled in his dark heart with war-strength and courage”

This verse relates how Aineias first prays to Zeus before he and Alkimedon will engage in battle. The poet then describes Aineias as being filled with courage, which links Aineias’s abundance of power and his prayer to the gods.

*Odyssey* 22.237 ἀλλ’ ἔτ’ ἄρα σθένεός τε καὶ ἀλκῆς πειρήτιζεν  
“but she still tested the strength and valour”

This verse is pronounced by the poet during his description of the battle against the suitors. He relates how Pallas Athene decided to test the strength and valour of Odysseus and Telemakhos, before granting them victory in their battle against the suitors. The spondaic verse and the imperfect indicate that the battle will continue for a while, before being resolved.

**b)** The word also has the meaning of “courage, fighting spirit, strength in battle”, when a god fills someone with it, or when someone is stirred by something (usually an event caused by divine intervention). It is possible that this construction is built on the semantically related μένος.

*Iliad* 2.451 ὀτρύνουσ’ ἰέναι: ἐν δὲ σθένος ὥρσεν ἐκάστῳ  
“urging them to go forward. She aroused the fighting spirit in each man’s heart”

This verse describes how Athene passed through the entire Greek army, encouraged the Greeks to fight and instilled in them the desire to fight.

*Iliad* 5.139 τοῦ μέν τε σθένος ὥρσεν, ἔπειτα δέ τ’ οὐ προσαμύνει,  
“but only stirred up the lion’s strength, and can then no more keep it away”

In these verses, Diomedes is aroused by Athene and is compared to a lion which first was warded off by a shepherd, but eventually succeeds in chasing and devouring the sheep. The poet describes how the shepherd only temporarily kept the lion away, but in doing so, the lion became only angrier and in the end the lion successfully destroyed the farm.

*Iliad* 14.151 ἤκεν: Ἀχαιοῖσιν δὲ μέγα σθένος ἔμβαλ' ἐκάστῳ  
“(the Earth-Shaker Poseidon) went out, and in the heart of every Akhaian implanted great courage”

This verse describes how Poseidon instills the Greeks with valour and fighting spirit in defiance of Zeus's prohibition to intervene in battle on behalf of the Greeks.

*Iliad* 17.212 ἀλκῆς καὶ σθένεος: μετὰ δὲ κλειτοὺς ἐπικούρους  
“(his limbs were filled with) force and fighting strength, and he went to his famous allies (calling them loudly)” (cf. supra)

*Iliad* 17.499 ἀλκῆς καὶ σθένεος πλῆτο φρένας ἀμφὶ μελαίνας:  
“(he prayed to Zeus and) was filled in his dark heart with war-strength and courage” (cf. supra)

*Iliad* 21.304 εὐρὺν ῥέων ποταμός: μέγα γὰρ σθένος ἔμβαλ' Ἀθήνη.  
“(not even) the wide-flowing river (could stop him now), since Athene injected great strength in him.”

This verse describes how Athene filled Akhilleus with so much strength and power, that he engages in a killing spree so destructive, that the rivers are no longer able to “digest” all the dead bodies that end up in their waters.

In the (pseudo-)Hesiodic *Shield of Herakles* these formulae have been adopted in a literal sense.

*Shield of Herakles* 420 ἀνδροφόνος μελίη: μέγα γὰρ σθένος ἔμπεσε φωτός.  
“(and) the man-killing ashen spear (cut through both tendons), for the man's great strength fell on it.”

μέγα γὰρ σθένος ἔμπεσε is an echo of the Homeric formulae μέγα γὰρ σθένος ἔμβαλ' and of μέγα σθένος ἔμβαλ' (cf. supra). The following verse describes how Herakles killed Kyknos with his spear. Whereas the other passages figuratively describe how the strength is added, this passage describes in a literal sense how the spear cut through both tendons, because the full force of Herakles leant on the spear.



In one particular instance, σθένος is combined with δίκη, “justice”. This verse describes how Sarpedon, who has just been killed, was a strong and righteous king in Lykia, indicating that justice without force is useless. Snell stated that σθένος meant “physical power”, but also the “power of a ruler”.<sup>13</sup> We believe that σθένος has both meanings in this passage.

*Iliad* 16.542 δς Λυκίην εἶρυτο δίκησί τε καὶ σθένει ᾧ:  
“who defended Lykia with the right of his justice and his strength”

c) The word σθένος sometimes has the meaning “force of men,” but in these verses the meaning of physical force is still possible.<sup>14</sup>

*Iliad* 11.827 χερσὶν ὕπο Τρώων: τῶν δὲ σθένος ὄρνυται αἰέν.  
“(who lie wounded or fallen) under the hands of the Trojans whose strength is forever on the rise”.

This verse describes how the Trojans have the upper hand: Eurypylos comes in great distress to Patroklos and describes how the Trojans become fiercer and how the number of wounded Greeks increases dramatically. One can translate σθένος by “strength”: in that case, it would mean that the Trojans are becoming stronger, but σθένος can also mean “force of men”, in which case the verse would mean that there are more and more Trojans nearing the Greek encampment. The translation of σθένος by “strength” seems better here.

*Iliad* 18.274 νύκτα μὲν εἰν ἀγορῇ σθένος ἔξομεν, ἄστρῳ δὲ πύργοι  
“tonight we will keep our forces in the assembly place, and the watch-towers (will guard) the city”

Pantheos, a friend of Hektor, pronounced this verse. He urged the Trojans to return to the city and not to remain in front of the Greek ships: as Akhilleus stopped his wrath, he would soon come out and rage among the Trojans. Therefore, it would be better to return to the walls. In this particular instance, the English translation “forces” incorporates both aspects. We personally believe that in this verse the meaning “troops” is meant, but “strength” is also possible.

d) In post-epic Greek writers, this meaning “force of men” is weakened into “quantity, abundance”. Pindar used σθένος as “abundance” in Isthmian 3,2 and in Olympian 9,51.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Snell 1975:28.

<sup>14</sup> LSJ *sub uoce*.

*Isthmian* 3,1–2 Εἴ τις ἀνδρῶν εὐτυχίῃσιν ἢ σὺν εὐδόξοις ἀέθλοισιν  
ἢ σθένει πλούτου κατέχει φρασὶ αἰανῇ κόρον  
“when someone, being fortunate, either by (winning) glorious prizes, or  
by abundance of wealth, still restrains his persisting insolence in his  
heart...”

*Olympian* 9,51 λέγοντι μὲν χθόνα μὲν κατακλύσαι μέλαιναν ὕδατος  
θένος  
“They say that the strength of the water has inundated (and destroyed)  
the black earth”

In this particular passage (O 9,51), σθένος can be translated by “power”, and in the Loeb edition, the translation “mighty waters” is used. Destruction of land by water can occur either by inundations, in which case there is a lot of water, and then we could translate “abundance of water, floods”, but it can also be that the water is so powerful, that it destroys everything on its way. In that case, the translation “powerful water” can also be used.

The evolution from “force” into “abundance” is not without parallels: ἰσχύς means “power, strength” in Homer and in the Mycenaean name *I su ku wo do to*, but means “fertility of the land” in Sophokles.<sup>16</sup>

e) Sometimes, σθένος is combined with a genitive of a personal name at the end of a verse, and means nothing else but the name itself. The poet uses this *procédé*, because he would not have been able to fit the name itself into the final position of the verse.<sup>17</sup> This combination of a noun with the meaning “power, strength” and a genitive of a name also happened with words such as ἴς, βίη and μένος.

*Iliad* 13,248 τὸν δὲ προσέφη σθένος Ἰδομενῆος:  
“to him spoke Idomeneus (in his strength)”.<sup>18</sup>

There is another instance, in which the metrical shape could have forced the poet to use σθένος followed by a genitive, namely σθένος Ἑκτορος ἀνδροφόνου, but in this particular context the meaning “the strength of man-slaughtering Hektor” makes sense and there is no need to assume that the description was simply a metrical device.

<sup>15</sup> The text is quoted from the Teubner edition by Snell and Maehler, and the translation comes from the Loeb edition, with some minor adaptations: αἰανῇ is rendered by “persisting”, and κατακλύσαι by “inundated (and destroyed)”.

<sup>16</sup> Melena 1976:431, with reference to Olivier Masson, who made the observation about in Sophokles.

<sup>17</sup> Düntzer 1872:533 *ein höchst bedeutendes Mittel zur Ausfüllung des Verses sind die Umschreibungen*; Snell 1969:42–45, with reference to Düntzer and Fränkel, Snell 1975:28–29.

<sup>18</sup> We follow here the *Chicago Homer* by including “in his strength” to render σθένος in the translation.

*Iliad* 9.351 ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὧς δύναται σθένος Ἑκτορος ἀνδροφόνου  
 “Yet even so he cannot hold the strength of man-slaughtering Hektor”

This verse is pronounced by Akhilleus in answer to Odysseus, who came to plead with him to cease his anger and return to battle. Akhilleus responds by stating that Agamemnon is not powerful enough to stop the killing that Hektor has started. We, therefore, think that the word σθένος has its meaning here, namely to emphasise the strength of Hektor;

Similarly, σθένος is used to describe the constellation Orion, and the word σθένος has no real added value: σθένος Ὠρίωνος is a formula, occurring once in the *Iliad* and twice in the *Works and Days*. We find it in *Iliad* 18,486 at the end of the verse. In these particular cases, however, the metrical necessity is less urgent, because the form Ὠρίων – with metrical lengthening of the second syllable<sup>19</sup> – would have fitted at the final slot of the hexameter without any problem.

*Iliad* 18,486 Πληϊάδας θ' Ὑάδας τε τό τε σθένος Ὠρίωνος  
 “the Pleiads, and the Hyads and (powerful) Orion”

This verse is echoed almost literally in Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 615:<sup>20</sup>

Πληϊάδες θ' Ὑάδες τε τό τε σθένος Ὠρίωνος  
 “But when the Pleiades (set), and the Hyades, and also Orion,...”

The formula σθένος Ὠρίωνος also occurs in *Works and Days* 598–599:

δμωσὶ δ' ἐποτρύνειν Δημήτερος ἱερὸν ἀκτὴν  
 δινέμεν, εὗτ' ἂν πρῶτα φανῇ σθένος Ὠρίωνος,  
 “(It is fitting to) order your servants to winnow the sacred grain of Demeter, when mighty Orion appears for the first time”.

It occurs in expanded form in *Works and Days* 619:

εὗτ' ἂν Πληϊάδες σθένος ὄβριμον Ὠρίωνος  
 “When the Pleiades, fleeing the crude Orion,...”

The basic meaning of the word σθένος is mostly physical in its earliest attestations, and occurs mostly in the *Iliad*, but we see that the word

<sup>19</sup> With its initial long syllable and long stem vowel, the only way to include this name in the hexameter is to lengthen the second syllable as well. This is a metrical adaptation of older Ὠρίων, with scansion – uu –.

<sup>20</sup> The text is taken from the *Chicago Homer*, and the translation is based on the Loeb edition.

gradually acquires meanings that are derived from “strength”, such as “courage”, “force of men” until it has become meaningless and can be left out in the translation. It is therefore logic that most etymologies started from the basic meaning “strength, physical force”. We now proceed to the analysis of the different etymologies.

### 3. *σθέvoς* and *\*sta, stā*

Curtius assumed that the word was related to the root *\*sta* and explained the meaning of “force, strength” as a logical consequence of “standing (firm)”.<sup>21</sup> He suspected that the aspiration of both Sanskrit *sthitas* and Greek *σθέvoς* was not of Indo-European origin, because the other cognates pointed at a plain voiceless plosive. He assumed that the presence of the *s* sound was responsible for the aspiration.<sup>22</sup> Osthoff agreed and pointed out that *σθέvoς* was the only Greek word with initial *sth-* and, consequently, he considered the aspiration to be unoriginal.<sup>23</sup> Sommer assumed that PIE did not have voiceless aspirates and, consequently, rejected the suggestion of a root *\*stʰen*. He also linked the Germanic word *stinnr* and *σθέvoς* to the root *\*sta*. He considered the Anlaut *σθ-* to be of non-Indo-European origin but also to be an un-Greek cluster, and to explain the aspiration and the link with *\*sta* he proposed an evolution *\*stasnos* > *\*stahnos* > *\*sthanos*.<sup>24</sup> He then supposed that the form *\*sthanos* was then influenced by the noun *μέvoς*, which had a similar meaning “courage”, and therefore *\*sthanos* changed its vocalism into *σθέvoς*.<sup>25</sup> The main problems with the link between *σθέvoς* and *\*sta* are first of all the vocalism, because one would expect the word to have been *σθάvoς*.<sup>26</sup> Whereas the vocalism could be explained by the influence of *μέvoς*, this is not the case for the aspiration. If the root was originally built on the root *sta*, it would be the only word of all the derivatives with an aspirate, hence we would have expected *\*στάvoς* or (if we accept the influence of *μέvoς*) *\*στέvoς*. The suggestion of transferred aspiration cannot be accepted, because normally the sequence *\*VsN* yielded *\*VhN* in Proto-

<sup>21</sup> Curtius 1873:424.

<sup>22</sup> Curtius 1873:493–494 with reference to Kuhn 1852, 1854a and b, and to Roscher 1868. In more recent times, this secondary aspirating effect was still accepted by Hiersche 1964 and Panagl 1971:58 (although he only accepted in in case of Greek initial *σφ* and *σγ*).

<sup>23</sup> Osthoff 1877:8: *mit unursprünglicher aspiration*.

<sup>24</sup> Sommer 1905:45–82, and especially 65–68 for *σθέvoς* and its evolution, with reference to Osthoff 1877 and Siebs 1900.

<sup>25</sup> Sommer 1905:65–66.

<sup>26</sup> Hoenigswald 1965:172.

Greek, which would eventually be resolved into either (Lesbian) *VNN* or long vowel and nasal, as can be seen in the evolution from *\*selasna* into *σελαννα* or *σελήνη*.<sup>27</sup> In addition, it is difficult to see where the *s* in Sommer's *\*stasnos* originated from. Sturtevant was aware of these problems and adapted Sommer's suggestion by reconstructing (in modern annotation) *\*sth<sub>2</sub>enos*, which should have given *\*σθάνος* (with aspiration caused by the laryngeal), and then *\*sthanos* was changed into *σθένος*, under the influence of *μένος* (just as Sommer had suggested).<sup>28</sup> In spite of Sturtevant's adaptation, there are still problems with this suggested etymology. The first problem is the root form *\*sth<sub>2</sub>enos* instead of *\*steh<sub>2</sub>nos*, as suggested by Sturtevant: this either presupposes a root form *\*sth<sub>2</sub>e* with an *nos* suffix or *\*sth<sub>2</sub>* with a suffix *\*-enos*. For the *enos* suffix there are only few, if any, parallels, which makes the assumption less likely. The second problem is the assumption of laryngeal aspiration in this form. Peters 1993a explained the aspirates in forms as *Ῥεσθεύς*, *Ῥεσθάσιον* and *Ῥέσθειον* as remnants of the root *\*steh<sub>2</sub>* in the zero grade, and assumed that the cluster *\*th<sub>2</sub>e* could give *ta* or *the* in Greek (a possibility which Collinge had already argued for earlier),<sup>29</sup> but did not link *σθένος* and *\*steh<sub>2</sub>*. The forms *Ῥεσθάσιον* and *Ῥέσθειον* are attested in Doric dialect areas, and Doric is a dialect that replaced the cluster *σθ* very early already by *στ*.<sup>30</sup> It is therefore not unlikely that these forms represent a hypercorrection. Peters did not rule out this possibility, but nevertheless called his reconstruction *nicht zwingend, aber plausibel*.<sup>31</sup> As we argued elsewhere, we believe that the evolution *\*th<sub>2</sub>e* into Greek *the* is excluded by the evidence: *\*h<sub>2</sub>* colours an *e* into *a* and there is no need to assume that this did not universally happen in Greek. We therefore assume that *Ῥέσθειον* cannot continue *\*ore-sth<sub>2</sub>eion*.<sup>32</sup> The third problem is that of the suggested influence of the vocalism *μένος* on that of *\*σθάνος*. While we admit that it is very difficult to prove or disprove that analogy with other forms or related

<sup>27</sup> Chantraine 1945:73; Ruijgh 1967:58–61; Rix 1976:78–79; Schmitt 1977:81.

<sup>28</sup> Sturtevant 1941:2, 1942:83.

<sup>29</sup> Collinge 1970:77 had also already assumed such an evolution, and used this to reconstruct *παρθένος* as *\*prth<sub>2</sub>enos*. See De Decker ftc b for a detailed analysis of this word.

<sup>30</sup> At a relatively early period (*V<sup>a</sup>* already), the voiceless aspirates of Greek became fricatives in the Doric dialects. This evolution is mostly clearly witnessed by the fact that the Doric inscriptions very often write <σ> for <θ>. Aristophanes had his Doric characters in his comedies use <σ> where speakers of Attic would use <θ>. Thumb 1913, however, argued that the writing <στ> indicated that the pronunciation was still [sth].

<sup>31</sup> Peters 1993a; see De Decker 2011:94–96 for an answer to this reconstruction.

<sup>32</sup> De Decker 2011:94–96.

words did not occur, we still believe that Greek had the neuter nouns influenced by the other forms of the paradigm, as is proved by the forms θράσος, κράτος and πλάτος which have a zero grade under the influence of the adjectives in the zero grade θρασύς, κρατύς and πλατύς.<sup>33</sup> We therefore believe that the connection with *\*steh<sub>2</sub>* is not likely.

#### 4. σθένος and *\*st<sup>h</sup>eno-*

Prellwitz and Streitberg suggested to link the Greek word with the Old-Icelandic *stinnr* and suggested an Indo-European root *\*st<sup>h</sup>en-*.<sup>34</sup> This etymology was contested almost immediately, firstly because the cluster *\*st<sup>h</sup>* was very uncommon, if not non-existent, in Indo-European,<sup>35</sup> and secondly, because of the Greek treatment of PIE *\*t<sup>h</sup>*. It had been assumed by several scholars that Greek rendered as *t* under all circumstances,<sup>36</sup> or that Greek rendered it as *t* if PIE *\*t<sup>h</sup>* was preceded by an *s* or a nasal.<sup>37</sup> Bolling followed Zubaty's suggestion and catalogued the etymology *\*st<sup>h</sup>en-* as *ad hoc*.<sup>38</sup>

#### 5. σθένος and the root *\*seg<sup>h</sup>* “to have, to hold”

As stated above, Bolling rejected the etymology *\*st<sup>h</sup>eno-*. He argued that there were two Indo-European roots, one being *\*seg<sup>h</sup>* (with palatal *g<sup>h</sup>*), visible in Greek ἔχω, Sanskrit *sahas*, Avestan *hazo* and Gothic *sigis*, and the other one being *\*seg<sup>wh</sup>(e)u* (with a labiovelar) visible in Sanskrit *sahvan* “powerful”, Old High German *sigu* and

<sup>33</sup> For πλάτος this was argued for by Nowicki 1976:80–81.

<sup>34</sup> Prellwitz 1892:283; Streitberg 1896:114, who noted that the combination of PIE *\*s* and tenuis aspirata was very rare.

<sup>35</sup> Streitberg noticed this already himself, and later also Siebs and Sommer (cf. *supra*) made the same observation.

<sup>36</sup> Meillet 1898:276. He is the most important scholar who stated this, but he explained the existence of the voiceless aspirates as expressive doublets. In order to prove this, he rejected several etymologies that contradicted his theory (such as Greek ἄσκηθής and Gothic *skapils*). He was later followed by Frisk, Lejeune and Chantraine. Zubaty's complementary distribution was followed by Elbourne. Meillet considered to be an expressive form, whereas Elbourne and Frisk rejected the probative value of *vettha* and οἶσθα, and Lejeune and Chantraine considered it a good example, but still exceptional. Szemerényi considered both *t* and *th* regular Greek outcomes of PIE *\*t<sup>h</sup>*. He therefore did not try to account for the different Greek reflexes.

<sup>37</sup> Zubaty 1892a:3.

<sup>38</sup> Bolling 1900.

Greek ἔχυρός (with loss of the labial element in the labiovelar because of the following *u* sound). Out of these two nouns a mixture *\*seghe* was created, which could be seen in Sanskrit *saghat*. That root had a derivation in *enos*, which was *\*seghenos* in which the accent lead to syncope, leading to a form *\*sghenos* which eventually became σθένος. Bolling's suggestion was adopted by Boisacq, who mentioned Sommer's suggestion very briefly and without discussion.<sup>39</sup> Frisk did not state which etymology was the right one, but rejected Sommer's suggestion, and seemed inclined to accept this etymology.<sup>40</sup> In his discussion of the (non) existence of the Indo-European voiceless aspirates Hiersche quoted as etymology for σθένος the form *\*zg<sup>h</sup>henos*.<sup>41</sup> The link between the root "to have" and "strength" is semantically very plausible, but cannot be sustained in Bolling's form, as *\*sghenos*, without labial element, would have given Greek *\*σχένος*. Seebold adapted the reconstruction and linked the root *\*seg<sup>h</sup>* with the noun ἰσχύς, and assumed that the root *\*seg<sup>h</sup>* had received an *u* extension.<sup>42</sup> That lead to the creation of the form *\*seg<sup>h</sup>u n/r*,<sup>43</sup> from which an adjective was built, visible in Greek ἔχυρός and Sanskrit *sahuri*, and also a noun in *nos*, namely *\*seg<sup>h</sup>unos*, which eventually became Greek σθένος. Following Seebold, Nussbaum linked σθένος with the root *\*seg<sup>h</sup>* and suggested an heteroclitic noun *\*seg<sup>h</sup>ur/uen* and linked σθένος with Germanic *sigiz*, Sanskrit *sahvan* and Greek ἔχω, ἰσχύς, ἔχυρός and ὀχυρός.<sup>44</sup> Nussbaum considered the root *\*sg<sup>h</sup>uen* to be the oblique root of the heteroclitic noun, which then became the basis for a possessive adjective *\*sg<sup>h</sup>uen-o*, "strong". From that adjective an abstract noun *\*sg<sup>h</sup>uenes/os*, "strength" was derived.<sup>45</sup> In order for *\*sg<sup>h</sup>u* to become *sth-* in Greek before a front vowel, the cluster needed to have been interpreted at one stage as a labiovelar. In other words, the form *\*sg<sup>h</sup>u-e-no* should have undergone the following evolution:<sup>46</sup> *\*sg<sup>h</sup>u-e-nos* > *\*sg<sup>wh</sup>e-nos* > *\*sk<sup>wh</sup>e-nos* > Greek σθένος. For this treatment there are parallels in Greek, as can be seen in the word for "wild animal": the form *\*g<sup>h</sup>uers* evolved into *\*g<sup>wh</sup>ers* and then became

<sup>39</sup> Boisacq 1938:862 only stated *autre avis chez Sommer*.

<sup>40</sup> Frisk 1960–1974 II: about Sommer's suggestion *lautlich unannehmbar*.

<sup>41</sup> Hiersche 1964:122.

<sup>42</sup> Seebold 1983:32.

<sup>43</sup> As we do not believe that there was a phonological opposition in PIE between resonants in their vocalic and consonantic nature, we do not indicate whether they were vocalic or consonantic.

<sup>44</sup> Nussbaum 1998:535–536.

<sup>45</sup> Nussbaum 1998:535–536.

<sup>46</sup> Nussbaum himself did not name the different categories.

φῆρ in Aeolic and θήρ in Attic.<sup>47</sup> A similar argument was made by Watkins stating that the root *\*seg<sup>h</sup>* had a *possibly related abstract noun* *\*sghwen-es* leading to the creation of σθένος.<sup>48</sup> Nussbaum's etymology has now been accepted by Beekes's etymological dictionary and by O'Sullivan in the *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos*.

### 6. σθένος and the root *\*g<sup>wh</sup>en-* "be abundant"

The link between σθένος and *\*g<sup>wh</sup>en-* was implicitly made by Siebs. While he listed σθένος as an example of PIE *\*st<sup>h</sup>*, he nevertheless doubted whether PIE *\*st<sup>h</sup>* corresponded to Greek σθ or στ, and also questioned the link with the root *\*sta* and Sanskrit *sthaman*. In addition, he pointed out that many instances of the voiceless aspirates in Sanskrit were language specific innovations.<sup>49</sup> He considered σθένος to be a Greek creation with *s mobile* based on the same root as that of εὐθενέω and εὐθηνία, which he connected with Old-Church-Slavonic *goneti* "be enough" and Lithuanian *ganà* "enough". As such, the suggested root form would have been of the structure *\*g<sup>wh</sup>en*.<sup>50</sup> Müller, without mentioning Siebs, noticed the unusual nature of the Anlaut σθ- and explained σθένος as the root of εὐθενέω, to which an *s mobile* had been added. He linked the two meanings by suggesting an evolution of "being rich, abundant, wealthy" into "being (physically) strong", and suggested the etymology *\*sg<sup>wh</sup>en*.<sup>51</sup> As such, this was the same suggestion as Siebs. Chantraine was skeptical but assumed that Müller's reconstruction was the most probable one.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Brugmann 1886:292, Buck 1890, Ruijgh 1967:43, Rix 1976:84, Sihler 1995:158, Piwowarczyk 2011. In Inlaut it is assumed that this cluster was doubled and became *\*kkw*, then became *\*kk<sup>w</sup>* and then became *pp* (Brugmann 1886:292, Ruijgh 1967:43, Čop 1971:24, Piwowarczyk 2011:120). Hooker 1983:53–54 considered such an evolution to be *linguistically undefendable*.

<sup>48</sup> Watkins 2000:74.

<sup>49</sup> Siebs 1900:281.

<sup>50</sup> Siebs did not mention the labiovelar himself, but combination of a velar sound in Balto-Slavic and a dental sound before a front vowel in Greek can only point to an Indo-European labiovelar.

<sup>51</sup> Müller 1926:713. He used the term *prothetische sigma*.

<sup>52</sup> Chantraine 1960–1974:965 (in the 1999 version of the DELG the two suggestions were listed without any preference).



## 7. σθένος and \*s-dhen-

As stated above, Zubaty rejected \*st<sup>h</sup>en because he considered it more likely that PIE \*st<sup>h</sup> yielded στ in Greek, but he also ruled out a link with \*sta.<sup>53</sup> In turn, he proposed a link with Sanskrit *dhana* “spoils from a fight”, albeit with some doubts because Avestan has *gaodana* instead of the expected \**gaozdana*. The only problem with the *s mobile* in this case is that there is only one branch in which the *s mobile* has survived (cf. *infra*).

## 8. No etymology is acceptable

Several scholars assume that the etymology of σθένος cannot be found, such as Walde-Pokorny, who did not mention the word in their dictionary, Schmitt-Brandt (cf. *infra*), Elbourne, who thinks that it is a loanword (because of the aspirate *th* after an *s*)<sup>54</sup> and Beekes in his new etymological dictionary who catalogued the etymology as *uncertain*.

9. The problems with the reconstructions involving *s mobile*

Two etymologies assume that the Greek word σθένος has a reflex of an *s mobile*. While this is not impossible, there is a problem with the fact that Greek would be the only branch to display a reflex of the *s* here. As stated above, Zubaty doubted his own etymology because the Indo-Iranian branch had no traces of the *s*. We believe that the fact that the Indo-Iranian branch has no signs of an initial *s* sound is not *per se* an argument against this etymology, because the *s mobile* can be present and absent within the same root in a language family, or even within a language, as can be seen in the root \**spek* which appears in Sanskrit *pásyati* but also as *spāśáyate*, in Avestan as *spasiieti*, in Greek (with metathesis) as σκέπτομαι and in Latin as *specio*,<sup>55</sup> and most famously by Greek στέγος and τέγος, cognate with Latin *tego* (and maybe also Sanskrit *sthaḡati*). Zubaty’s etymology is not without merits, because the Greek evolution of \**s-d<sup>h</sup>en* would have been st<sup>h</sup>en. The semantic evolution from the concrete object “spoils of a fight” into the abstract meaning of “force” is perfectly possible and it would

<sup>53</sup> Zubaty 1892:3–5.

<sup>54</sup> Elbourne 1998:21–26 and *fit* a followed Zubaty in assuming that a PIE \**t<sup>h</sup>* lost its aspiration in Greek after an *s* or a resonant.

<sup>55</sup> Fortson 2004:70.

be another example of Siebs' Law.<sup>56</sup> What we find more problematic, however, is not the concept of *s mobile* in itself, as there are some good examples in case of aspirates, such as the Dutch doublets *doom* and *stoom*,<sup>57</sup> and the Sanskrit forms *bhurati* and *sphurati*,<sup>58</sup> but the fact that in the reconstructions of Müller and Zubaty Greek is the only branch that preserved the *s*: while it is always possible, that the other branches lost the *s* forms, we are still inclined to the *testis unus, testis nullus* principle, and would therefore prefer a reconstruction where more than one branch preserved the *s*.

### 10. The Greek reflex of PIE *\*t<sup>h</sup>*

If one accepts the existence of phonemic voiceless aspirates (which is for this etymology not strictly necessary), one is confronted with the reflex of PIE *\*t<sup>h</sup>* in Greek. Since Zubaty and especially since Meillet, it has been assumed that the Greek reflex was *t*. This assumption was based on cognates such as the superlative suffix *iṣthas* versus Greek ἰστος, Sanskrit *tiṣṭhami* versus Greek ἵστημι, Sanskrit *panthās* versus Greek πόντος and πάτος, Sanskrit *prthus* versus Greek πλατύς, and Avestan *paθana* versus Greek πετάννυμι.<sup>59</sup> This is not the place to discuss the issue in detail, but we believe that the difference in aspiration can be explained in most cases by the presence of a laryngeal, which caused aspiration in Indo-Iranian but not in Greek (this also explains the difference in consonantism between Sanskrit *aham* and Greek ἐγώ, and Sanskrit *mahi* and Greek μέγας). In addition, we believe that Greek ἀσκηθής and Celtic *scíth*, and Greek πένθος, Celtic *cessaid* and Lithuanian *kenčiu* indicate that the Greek reflex of PIE *\*t<sup>h</sup>* was *th*.<sup>60</sup> As such, we believe that the Greek reflex of PIE *\*t<sup>h</sup>* is not a

<sup>56</sup> Zubaty wrote in 1892 and Siebs only formulated his Law in 1900. It is important to point out that Siebs only formulated his Law for the Anlaut, and called his article *Anlautstudien* (underlining is ours). Collinge proved that Siebs' Law to be correct. Recently, Szemerényi and Fortson (he alluded in his exercises to the fact that the Law was wrong) have tried to discredit this law by using examples such as Sanskrit *miḍham* and Avestan *zdi* but those forms are not really an example for a cluster *#sD<sup>h</sup>* as those forms come from *\*misd<sup>h</sup>os* and *\*h<sub>1</sub>sd<sup>h</sup>i* respectively, and neither of the clusters are found in word-initial position.

<sup>57</sup> Rasmussen 1999(1987):220.

<sup>58</sup> Kuryłowicz 1956:378.

<sup>59</sup> The examples are taken from Meillet 1898.

<sup>60</sup> Rasmussen 1987, 1989; De Decker 2010. We disagree with Rasmussen in that we believe that there was no aspiration by laryngeals in Greek (De Decker 2011, ftc a and b).

valid argument against a reconstruction *\*st<sup>h</sup>en* (which does not mean that this etymology is the correct one).

### 11. Can Mycenaean shed new light on the etymology?

The next step is to see to what extent the Mycenaean evidence can shed some light on this problem. Names in *stheus* are very common in Greek as from the earliest Greek myths on, as can be seen by the names such as Eurystheus in the myth of Herakles (important in the Mycenaean world), and by names of kings and warriors such as Menestheus, Sthenobaios in the Homeric poems and the Epic Cycle.<sup>61</sup> The names in *stheus* are shortened (often called *hyperchoristic*) forms of proper names in σθένης,<sup>62</sup> and given their link with the Mycenaean world, we can use the tablets to analyse the suggested etymologies. Two of the etymologies assume a genuine and a secondary labiovelar. The labiovelars and the cluster *\*k* followed by a semivowel merge in Proto-Greek<sup>63</sup> and appear in Mycenaean as *\*kw*, written with the labiovelar sign.<sup>64</sup> Since the etymologies involve the presence of labiovelars (or clusters that behave as labiovelars), we can use the Mycenaean tablets, which preserved the labiovelars, as firsthand information to verify the correctness of the etymologies, *\*s-g<sup>wh</sup>en-os* and *\*sg<sup>h</sup>u-enos*. In the tablets we find the following names, which are mostly linked with σθένοϋς. The first name is the feminine name *Da te ne ja* which is normally<sup>65</sup> reconstructed as Δασθένεια.<sup>66</sup> The next name is *a pi te ja* which is reconstructed as Ἀμφισθένεια,<sup>67</sup> But there is no general agreement on this name,<sup>68</sup> as Landau read it as Ἀμφιθέα.<sup>69</sup> Then we have the name *ra wo te* and *ra wo ti jo*, which are considered to be hyperchoristic forms of Λαφοσθένης.<sup>70</sup> The next form is *pe ri te u*,

<sup>61</sup> Ruijgh 1967:193; see also Chantraine 1968–1974:388 who pointed out the father's name as well. For the Mycenaean nature of Eurystheus (and the Heraklean sagas) see Nilsson 1972:195–197 and 209–210.

<sup>62</sup> Ruijgh 1967:255–257.

<sup>63</sup> Brugmann 1886:292, Buck 1890.

<sup>64</sup> Čop 1971:24, Rix 1976:84, Sihler 1995:158, Piwowarczyk 2011. Brugmann and Buck had no access to the Mycenaean material, but the Mycenaean evidence confirmed their assumption.

<sup>65</sup> Morpurgo(-Davies) 1963:57 only indicated that this is a female anthroponym.

<sup>66</sup> Landau 1958:39, Ruijgh 1967:255–257, Aura Jorro 1999 I:158.

<sup>67</sup> Ruijgh 1967:257, Aura Jorro 1999 I:86 (with reference to Ruijgh).

<sup>68</sup> Morpurgo(-Davies) 1963:28 and Bennett-Olivier 1973:153 only mentioned the name without giving any suggestion.

<sup>69</sup> Landau 1958:26.

<sup>70</sup> Ruijgh 1967:224, Melena 1976:432 Aura Jorro 1999 II:235 (with reference to Ruijgh).

which Ruijgh read as Περισθεύς.<sup>71</sup> Ruijgh interpreted the name *e pi ta jo* as Ἐπισθαῖος, which he considered to be a derived form from Ἐπισθένης.<sup>72</sup> In addition, he also interpreted *po ro te u* as Προσθεύς.<sup>73</sup> The last form is the least convincing, as it could also be read as Πρωτεύς (as Ruijgh admitted himself),<sup>74</sup> in which case there would be no labiovelar involved.

These proper names indicate that the Mycenaean forms have no trace of any labiovelar sign, which argues against the two etymologies with labiovelars. We now have to address the question if the lack of labiovelar signs in Linear B is conclusive, or if this absence was part of an ongoing process that started much earlier. Already within PIE labiovelars lost their labial element if it was immediately preceded or followed by a *u* sound. Examples of this are βουκόλος and ἐκατόμβη.<sup>75</sup> It is also sometimes assumed that a preceding *s* sound neutralised the velar distinction (especially in Anlaut), and that *\*sk*, *\*sk<sup>w</sup>* and *\*sk̥* were treated all in the same way.<sup>76</sup> We believe that this assumption is contradicted by Latin *squalor* and *scindo* from *\*sk<sup>w</sup>al* and *\*sk̥i-n-d-o*, and by Sanskrit *gacchati*, *khañjati*, *chittas* and *skhalati*, from *\*g<sup>w</sup>msketi*, *\*skengeti*, *\*sk̥<sup>h</sup>idos* and *sk<sup>wh</sup>aleti* (or *\*sg<sup>wh</sup>aleti*, if one is not willing to accept Indo-European voiceless aspirates, or *\*sg<sup>wh</sup>h<sub>2</sub>eleti*, if one does not want to accept the existence of PIE *\*a*). These forms indicate that there were three velar series and that the distinction remained intact after an initial *s*.<sup>77</sup> In Greek, the labiovelars were palatalised at an early stage when they were followed by a semi-vowel *i*. We have to investigate if it is possible that the evolution *\*sg<sup>h</sup>uenos* > *\*sg<sup>hu</sup>enos* > *\*sk̥<sup>hu</sup>enos* > σθένοϛ had already happened in pre-Mycenaean times. Is a scenario likely in which the “real” labiovelar was still visible in Linear B, but the cluster *\*sg<sup>hu</sup>* had already changed into *sthe*? Although there are not many instances where a labiovelar was preceded by an *s*, we think it is not likely that this cluster had already changed, as there are words with an etymology *\*sk<sup>w</sup>*- in which the tablets still have the labiovelar sign: *qe ro<sub>2</sub>* is

<sup>71</sup> Ruijgh 1967:257.

<sup>72</sup> Ruijgh 1967:224, Melena 1976:433, Aura Jorro 1999 I:226.

<sup>73</sup> Ruijgh 1967:193 and 257, Melena 1976:433 states about Ruijgh's explanation *lo que parece convincente*.

<sup>74</sup> Chadwick-Ventris 1973:573 (*dubitanter*), Morpurgo-Davies 1963:256 (*dubitanter*), Hooker 1983:68, Aura Jorro 1999.

<sup>75</sup> This is one of the many brilliant discoveries of Ferdinand de Saussure. For ἐκατόμβη one can also refer to Foy 1899:3–4. The correctness of the *boukolos* rule for PIE (and not just for Greek) has been proved recently by Weiss 1994:137ss.

<sup>76</sup> Beekes 1995:111.

<sup>77</sup> We refer for a more detailed discussion of this problem to De Decker *ftc* c.

usually interpreted as *\*sk<sup>w</sup>elion*,<sup>78</sup> and *qa ra to ro* stands probably for σπάλαθρον,<sup>79</sup> (in which case both forms would be another element against Beekes's assumption that initial *s* neutralised the velar opposition). We believe that these elements speak against a linking of σθένοϝ with *\*seg<sup>h</sup>* and *\*g<sup>wh</sup>en*, because if they were linked, we would have expected forms with *qe ne* which are not found in the tablets.

## 12. Evidence from other branches

There is one inscription in Thracian which might shed some additional light on this problem. The famous but highly contested *Ringinscription* from Ezerovo (VI<sup>a</sup>–V<sup>a</sup>) contains the personal name ROLISTENEAS. The exact meaning of this name is uncertain, but it is sometimes interpreted as a compound with the Greek suffix *sthenes*,<sup>80</sup> although there is no agreement on it. Schmitt-Brandt compared this name with the Celtic name *Stenio* and the Latin name *Sthenius*. He linked the name with the Thracian place name Στενεκορτα and made a connection with the Germanic *stinnr*.<sup>81</sup> He therefore rejected *\*sg<sup>wh</sup>en* as possible etymology of Greek σθένοϝ and considered σθένοϝ to be a borrowing because it had an aspirate.<sup>82</sup> While the appearance of this proper name in that Thracian inscription can still be explained by assuming a Greek borrowing, this is in our opinion less likely for the name of the fortress and we consider it to be very unlikely for the same form in Celtic. We agree with Schmitt-Brandt in linking these words with Germanic *stinnr* but we believe that also the Greek word is inherited. If we accept that the Thracian and Celtic names are related to the Greek word, we have to start from an PIE form *\*st<sup>h</sup>en-* and maybe an earlier form *\*(s)d<sup>h</sup>en-*. It cannot be ruled out that the Thracian personal name and the name of the fortress are not linked at all with the Greek word σθένοϝ. After all, the meaning of the Ezerovo-inscription is uncertain and the name of the fortress is not entirely clear either. It is equally possible that the Celtic name has nothing to do with this either. As for the Latin name, it is likely that it was a Greek borrowing, which seems to be confirmed by the fact that Latin has *th* because writings with *th*, *ch* and *ph* usually

<sup>78</sup> Chadwick-Ventris 1973:577.

<sup>79</sup> LSJ, 1996 supplement on page 279.

<sup>80</sup> Kretschmer 1915:75, Dečev 1957:567, Rasmussen 1999(1987b):289.

<sup>81</sup> Schmitt-Brandt 1967:47–48.

<sup>82</sup> Schmitt-Brandt 1967:60.

only occur in Greek borrowings.<sup>83</sup> In that case these elements do not provide any additional information on the etymology of this word.

### 13. Which etymology is then the “correct” one?

Even if we do not accept the Celtic and Thracian evidence, we are still faced with the fact that two etymologies have been ruled out because of the Mycenaean evidence and (to a much lesser extent) that the name appears without any sign of a (labio)velar in other languages. Therefore the question remains what the exact etymology of  $\sigma\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$  is. In our opinion the link with  $*steh_2$  is excluded and the etymology of Streitberg-Prellwitz,  $*st^hen-$  might be too *ad hoc* although there is nothing that conclusively rules it out. As a result, we are left with two options. The first option is that we can accept the suggestion by Zubaty to link  $\sigma\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$  with the Indo-Iranian  $*dhanā$ , and link it with Germanic  $stinnr$  (which Zubaty had not done). We could then reconstruct a PIE form  $*s-dhen-$  and assume that the Indo-Iranian branch took the variant without the  $s$  and that the Greek and Germanic branches took the one with  $s$ , which would have become  $*st^henos$  with the effects of Siebs’s Law. In Greek  $\sigma\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$  and Old-Icelandic  $stinnr$  the meaning is more physical, which would then be an isogloss of Greek and Germanic against Indo-Iranian (which is remarkable because Greek shares much more lexical innovations with Indo-Iranian and the Eastern branches than with the Western ones, but could be explained by the fact that Greek occupies a central position between East- and West-Indo-European). Such a distinction is not without parallels, as can be seen in the root  $*krei-$ : Sanskrit  $śrī$  means “beauty” and has no physical meaning, whereas Greek  $\kappa\rho\epsilon\acute{\iota}\sigma\sigma\omega\nu$  means “stronger”, which is clearly physical. In that scenario, the original meaning would have been “abundance”, and Greek and Germanic would have taken this “abundance” in the physical sense, hence the meaning “strength”, whereas Indo-Iranian used it in the sense of “abundance of goods, riches”, hence “wealth”. The other option is that we reject the inherited nature of Greek altogether and refrain from suggesting any etymology. We believe that this would be too defeatist.

<sup>83</sup> As is proved by the quote from Cicero, *Orator* 160: *Burrum semper Ennius, numquam Pyrrhum*. We owe this reference to D. Knecht, our professor of Latin Linguistics and Literature at the Universiteit Gent. A discussion of this phrase can also be found in Weiss 2009:28.

### 14. Conclusion

We started by discussing the meanings of the word in the oldest Greek poetic texts (Homer up to Pindar). We found that the meaning “physical strength” was the original one, and that from that meaning, the word acquired other significations. We then treated the different etymologies that have been given for Greek σθένοϛ. The most commonly accepted etymologies were \*sg<sup>h</sup>uen es/os related to the root “to have, hold” and \*s- g<sup>wh</sup>en related to Slavic *goneti*. We then decided to check these suggestions with the Mycenaean evidence. Given the fact that names in *stheus* were common in both Mycenaean everyday life as in the mythology, we expected to find some names in the tablets. The names occurred but we did not find any labiovelar, which ruled out the two most commonly accepted etymologies. We then looked at Thracian and Celtic names, and found that they could shed some light on the etymology but that their evidentiary weight was lessened by the fact that the passages in which they occurred were not entirely clear. We then concluded that even if the Thracian and Celtic evidence were discarded, the Mycenaean evidence still compelled us to accept the etymology by Zubaty in which Greek was linked with Sanskrit *dhana*, but that it could also be linked with Germanic *stinnr*. As a result, it is our opinion that the most likely etymology would \*s-d<sup>h</sup>en with *s mobile* in Greek and Germanic. The alternative is to reject the inherited nature of this word altogether, which we do not think is necessary.

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